

FOUND children found after missing 15 hours

Wednesday, 22 May 2013 12:57

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Seward County Sheriff's Detective Ryam McVey places one of the three children found safely this morning on the west side of Liberal in his SUV after they went missing around 6:30 p.m. Tuesday evening while staying at a family member's house in rural southwest Seward County about five miles west of town. The children, ages 3, 5, and 7 were unharmed and reportedly "tired and hungry." L&T photo/Victoria Calderon

Three small children missing over night, found 5 miles from residence

By LARRY PHILLIPS and EARL WATT • Leader & Times Three young children went missing Tuesday evening in rural southwest Seward County, and it triggered one of the largest searches in recent memory. Fortunately, the youngsters were found about 9:30 a.m. today.

"The sheriff's office received a report at 7:30 Tuesday evening, May 21, that three missing juveniles just walked away from a residence," said Seward County Undersheriff Gene Ward. "They were being watched by a family member."

The children ranged in ages from 3 to 7 and all have blond hair, according to Ward.

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“The 7-year-old boy was last seen wearing black parachute pants, a gray athletic T-shirt and yellow rain boots,” Ward said earlier today. “The 5-year-old girl was wearing a red T-shirt and blue-jean shorts, and the 3 year-old girl was wearing a yellow tank-top and blue shorts.”

The Guymon Daily Herald has identified the children as Damian, 7, Aurora, 5, and Lyla, 3.

At around 9:30 a.m. today, dispatchers passed out a call that possibly the children had been found by a citizen and taken to a business office and warehouse on General Welch Boulevard.

Officers were dispatched to the location, and at 9:49, the call went out from an officer confirming it was the three missing children. He also reported they were in fairly good shape and uninjured. He said over the radio they were just very tired and hungry.

The children had walked around five miles in 15 hours through the night.

More than 70 emergency responders had searched the fields surrounding the residence where the children went missing all through the night, according to Ward. He confirmed earlier today that six square miles had been searched “inch-by-inch.”

There were a least 25 or more ATVs – 4-wheelers – that were also involved in the search, he said.

Personnel from Liberal Police Department, Seward County Rural Fire Deptment, the sheriff’s department, Tyrone Police Department, Turpin Police Department, Beaver County Sheriff’s office, and the Gray County Search and Rescue Team were all involved

The Kansas Bureau of Investigation even assisted in the search.

According to Ward, the KBI was interviewing those familiar with the children to try to put together the puzzle of why the children went missing.

Ward also said they had numerous police dogs working as well. Dogs were brought in from Wichita and Hutchinson to work with LPD’s dog.

Search teams even utilized thermal detectors and aircraft in an effort to locate three children missing since 6:30 p.m. Tuesday.

“Thermal imagers will pick up a hot rock,” Ward said. “It was telling us where the rabbits were.”

Though the sheriff’s office was notified at 7:30, Ward said the family had searched throughout the house and surrounding area for “an hour or so” prior to calling authorities.

The initial reports indicated that the children were left with a family member at the farmhouse while the rest of the family went to Liberal to “get something.” That’s when the children went missing.

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These emergency responders were among more than 25 4-wheelers involved in searching for three children who went missing Tuesday evening and were found earlier today, 15 hours after they wandered off from a house in rural southwest Seward County. L&T photo/Earl Watt

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